

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 01626 111207Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7266

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1626

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

FOR KUX, NEA/INS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OGEN, CE

SUBJ: MALARIA PROJECT

REF: STATE 106211 (STADIS)

1. TOM ARNDT, JUST BACK FROM AID DONORS MEETING, HAS CONFIRMED DEVELOPMENTS MENTIONED PARAS 1 AND 2 OF REFTEL. PERSON THEY WISH TO SEND HERE IS LARRY COWPER, WHO IS ADMITTEDLY TECHNICALLY CAPABLE AND IS FAVORABLY KNOWN TO GSL MALARIA PEOPLE.

2. COMMENTS IN PERKINS-THIBAUT LETTER OF FEBRUARY 8 STILL REPRESENT OUR THINKING, ALTHOUGH WE NOTE WITH SOME WRY AMUSEMENT THAT 12 WEEKS WORK HERE A YEAR HAS BEEN SOMEHOW RAISED TO 40 PERCENT. WE ASKED ARNDT WHY MAN COULD NOT BE BASED IN COUNTRY WITH LARGE AID MISSION, AS PHILIPPINES. AID'S POSITION IS THAT HE SHOULD ONLY COVER SOUTH ASIA BECAUSE OF THE DOMINANCE OF MALARIA IN THIS AREA. WE DO NOT AGREE WITH ARGUMENT LAST SENTENCE PARA 2 REFTEL THAT SPECIALIST IN PAKISTAN, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD NOT SPEND SUFFICIENT TIME AWAY FROM POST IN SRI LANKA, WHICH SEEMS TO ARGUE FOR LACK OF AID CONTROL OF
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ITS PERSONNEL. THE HAVE NOT ANSWERED THE QUESTION WHAT A MAN HERE WOULD DO WITH THE OTHER 60 PERCENT OF HIS TIME. IF HE IS TO HAVE ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES ELSEWHERE IN THE AREA, THEN HE COULD BE BASED AT ANOTHER LOCATION. HOWEVER, WE RECOGNIZE THAT IF HE IS TO SPEND A LARGE PERCENT OF HIS TIME IN OUR COUNTRY AND DIVIDE THE REST OF HIS TIME IN FOUR OTHER SOUTH ASIA COUNTRIES, IT MAY BE PREFERABLE IN TERMS OF HIS

FAMILY TO LIVE IN THE POST WHERE HE WILL SPEND THE LARGEST SINGLE BLOCK OF TIME. THIS REQUIRES ANALYSIS OF WHERE HE WILL ACTUALLY SPEND HIS TIME.

3. AID CANNOT TAKE MALARIA POSITION OUT OF ITS PRESENT 4-OFFICER STAFF (ARNDT, BILLINGS, EVANS, ANTHOLT) WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING ITS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE PRESENT AND PLANNED PROGRAM. WE HAVE RUN OUT OF OFFICE SPACE, AND IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO ACCOMMODATE COWPER, ALTHOUGH NOT IMPOSSIBLE. WE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND WHY AID CANNOT BASE A REGIONAL SPECIALIST ELSEWHERE IN ASIA, WITH PART-TIME RESPONSIBILITY FOR SRI LANKA PROGRAM. THE QUESTION IS, HAVE THEY MADE A REAL EFFORT TO FIND AN ALTERNATIVE RESIDENCE IN ASIA.

4. APPRECIATE YOUR WILLINGNESS TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT FOR US ON THIS ONE, AND WISH YOU LUCK. OBVIOUSLY, THE MALARIA PROGRAM IS ESSENTIAL AND CANNOT ULTIMATELY BE SACRIFICED TO BUREAUCRATIC INFIGHTING. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL AVENUES ARE EXPLORED AND DO NOT LIKE TO BE PRESENTED WITH A TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT ULTIMATUM. THE ISSUE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ARISE AGAIN IN OTHER CONTEXTS.

5. IN SUM, WE CONTINUE TO PREFER THAT MALARIA MAN NOT BE ASSIGNED HERE. HOWEVER, IF THERE IS NO REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE, WE WILL ACCEDE TO THE ADDITION OF THIS PERSON HERE.
REED

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